

Override Study Committee Minutes

April 16, 2014 – 6:00 PM

School Committee Hearing Room – 5th Floor – Town Hall, 333 Washington Street

Present: Dick Benka, co-chair; Susan Wolf Ditzkoff, co-chair; Alberto Chang; Chad Ellis; Janet Gelbart; Michael Glover; Carol Kamin; Carol Levin; Sergio Modigliani; Lisa Serafin Sheehan; Jim Stergios; Ann Connolly Tolkoff. Kevin Lang participated by telephone.

Dick Benka noted that Kevin Lang would be participating by telephone; the connection will ensure that he can be heard and can hear members of the committee. Materials have been distributed electronically and any votes will be roll call votes.

1. Municipal Subcommittee Report.

Michael Glover presented the “Municipal Subcommittee – Interim Report.” The subcommittee has met with heads of the Town departments and focused its review on Town departments. As school population has grown, the Town’s share of the budget has declined. Review was focused on the eight highest dollar departments; Police, DPW, Fire, Library, Building, Health, IT, and Recreation.

Police staffing is unchanged since 2008; costs are high on a per capita basis relative to other municipalities of similar size. It was noted that Brookline borders Boston, and its per capital costs were reviewed in that light by the January 2009 Efficiency Initiative Committee report. Many of the efficiencies recommended in that report have been implemented. The subcommittee notes that hiring part-time school crossing guards in the morning and afternoon, rather than using Parking Control Officers for this task, could increase ticketing and parking fine revenues. One option would be to study the revenue lost by comparing school days vs. summer months. Potential modification of police detail requirements was presented.

With respect to DPW, many of the recommendations of the 2009 EIC report have been implemented. The subcommittee suggests that fleet maintenance could be put out to bid again with a tighter RFP than was used in 2007. DPW has put solid waste collection and disposal out to bid and is in the process of evaluating the proposals. It is recommended that trash pickup be scheduled for four, rather than five, days per week to minimize Saturday overtime charges in the event of holidays or inclement weather. Parks and Open Space potential for outsourcing should continue to be evaluated, particularly grass mowing and field maintenance, as should the need for take home vehicles (it was noted there were changes in light of the 2009 EIC report). The street sweeping schedule cannot be revised without changes in an existing EPA consent decree.

Approximately one-half of the Fire Department’s responses are for medical emergencies, with 1 fire in FY13 resulting in a loss greater than \$100,000, six multiple alarm fires, and 19 fires resulting in a loss less than \$100,000. Firefighting staffing was reduced by 7 FTEs in FY10; it has been constant since then. Brookline’s per capita cost is 19th statewide, greater than some neighboring communities such as Newton but less than Watertown and Cambridge. Many, but not all, of the 2009 EIC recommendations have been implemented. Boston and Brookline are

the only communities in Massachusetts with universal staffing of 4 firefighters per apparatus; Cambridge, Needham, Newton and Waltham have 4 firefighters on some equipment and/or during the winter. Reducing manning to 3 on engines only could save \$2.1 million per year; reducing on all equipment could save \$2.9 million per year. The NFPA general standard is for 4 firefighters per apparatus, with more or less under certain circumstances. Results of various studies were presented. Any manning changes would have to be collectively bargained. Reduction of one fire company (from 7 companies to 6) would save \$1.7 million per year, and would not have to be collectively bargained. The Chief believes that having 2 ladder trucks available for a structure fire is essential; eliminating a company would reduce the number of companies held in reserve. It was noted by the Committee that there is mutual aid; it was also noted that the analysis of the number of personnel on the scene under various scenarios depended on the number chosen in a report (e.g., choosing a multiple of 3 rather than 4, or vice versa, could lead to different apparent results).

One out of two 2009 EIC recommendations for the Building Department was implemented. The subcommittee recommends no change.

With regard to the Library, an option would be to reduce the budget for materials, the most preferred cost cutting option of the Town Librarian. The funds could be supplemented by Library trust funds, which, it was noted, are currently expended at less than benchmark amounts. Other options would be closure of the Putterham branch at a savings in personnel of approximately \$300,000 per year in addition to other costs, though this would leave 20% of the residents of the Town underserved; paying Sunday time at straight pay consistent with statutory requirements; and reducing library hours.

The Information Technology recommendations of the EIC have not been implemented. The subcommittee recommends increased technical training of personnel, and hiring based on ability to use technological resources, as well as greater outsourcing and flexibility in the Help Desk. Issues of IT governance should be clarified, in accordance with the 2001 mandate for consolidated governance of technology (including strategy, oversight, accountability, procurement, staffing, etc.). The IT-School relationship and relationship between IT and the Building Department should be clarified and confirmed.

The 2009 EIC recommendation for the Health Department has been implemented. Further steps could include reduction or elimination of the grant to the Brookline Community Mental Health Center, elimination of the Community Health Manager position; and elimination of day care inspections, which is a state function in all other Massachusetts municipality. Services would be impacted.

The Recreation Department recovers most costs through fees, with goal of covering the Town subsidy, which is approximately \$1 million, within three years. More than \$400,000 of the Town subsidy is the cost of the pool, which has not been fully recoverable due to operations costs, use by the Schools, and so on. The non-recoverable portion of pool costs should be identified, so that the cost-recovery goal is realistic. It was also noted that even with full cost recovery, Soule fees might be under market, though it was also noted that sub-program revenues can exceed sub-program costs.

The subcommittee supports efforts to reduce contractual vacation, personal time and sick leave time.

2. Future Meeting Schedule.

The MIT Task Force will be presenting on May 7, and there will be further discussion of the integrated model. Subcommittees and Task Forces were requested to send their draft reports to Susan and Dick.

Agenda

Slides showing “Override Study Committee – Municipal Subcommittee – Interim Report – Draft – As of April 16, 2014”